

## **Minutes of the Human Rights Commission meeting**

June 17, 2023

Present: Susan MacDonald-Bolanos, Angela D'Souza, Dianna Stallone, Alton McCray, Booker Bush, Megan Paik

Absent: Chelsea Sunday Kline

Meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m.

### **Public Comment**

There was no comment.

### **Minutes**

Dianna questioned the spelling of a word as "folx" in the May 2023 minutes. Megan explained that the alternative spelling was used to signify awareness and inclusion of those who are non-binary or genderqueer. Dianna mentioned that the minutes were particularly thorough; Megan responded that it was particularly important to have a transcript-like version of the minutes for the months in which HRC has guest speakers like Kristin Rhodes. The minutes were unanimously approved.

### **Reading Frederick Douglass Together 2023**

Alton will attend the event at Historic Northampton on July 2 at 11 a.m. with a rain date of July 3. Booker remarked on the power of this community event as people read a paragraph at a time; Angela has participated in similar readings and was in the audience in the previous year as well. Megan said she chose to participate as a reader in the past two years since HRC was one of the many sponsors. She explained the sequence of the event to the commissioners who can attend this year.

### **Committee to Investigate Racialized Harms**

Alton has already been confirmed to be a member of the committee. Megan wondered which city councilors will serve on the committee. Alton relayed that Council President Nash said that all candidate interviews will be completed by the end of the next day. Each selected member will be notified individually, but it is unclear how the news about the committee selections will be shared. The committee may have an organizational meeting in August but is not expected to start its work in earnest until September.

### **Planning Committee**

Angela has not yet spoken to staff at the Smith College Museum of Art. The program/planning committee did meet online with Emily Britton of Easthampton Community Resources Committee and Susan Triolo of Sunderland to discuss the possibility of a regional event to observe the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Declaration of Human Rights (December 10, 2023). Easthampton has an event fund that has not been used; Emily was interested in planning a joint program with HRC. Megan had spoken to the mayor about the possibility, and she assented that the city could help promote any such event. Dianna had also created a list of human-rights related [dates by month](#); she invited the commissioners to add to and edit this list. Megan asked if Dianna wished to include this on HRC's webpage and/or post reminders of the dates on Facebook.

### **Commission News**

Booker asked about the possibility of a city councilor as a liaison to the HRC. Megan said that the mayor has identified a staff person from the executive branch to possibly liaise for the HRC, but that decision is far from being official. Dianna and Alton have offered to be the next chair and vice chair of the HRC, respectively. The commissioners discussed whether a vote to select leadership should be taken at the current or July's meeting. Booker asked Angela for her thoughts on the candidates; Chelsea also may not be aware that these two members have agreed to serve. The commissioners then voted unanimously to elect Dianna as the chair and Alton as vice chair and expressed their gratitude for taking on these roles.

Dianna asked for more clarity about procedures along with the relevant information for their Facebook and Zoom accounts. She also asked that the commissioners adopt a resolution thanking the service of the three departing commissioners and the service of Megan as chair. The motion passed unanimously. Megan also expressed gratitude, on behalf of the HRC, for that recognition and appreciation to Booker who served the Northampton Policing Review Commission and Susan who served on the Select Committee to Study Barriers to Service on Boards and Commissions.

### **New Business**

Angela will be meeting with Robin MacEwan to get an update on the working group for racial equity at the Northampton Community Gardens. A previous in-person meeting was postponed and moved to Zoom, but she was not able to attend. The group is asking gardeners to voluntarily display banners with the statement, "we stand for racial equity, access, and inclusivity while enhancing the health of the natural environment." The other side of the banner has a QR code that links to a repository of information documenting the history and activities of the group's work. Booker asked if the banner could be made available to other community gardens; Angela will ask Robin about this.

The next HRC monthly meeting was scheduled for July 19 at 6 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m.